

PAUL'S GREAT DESIRE TO GO TO ROME

TEXT: ROMANS 1:5-17

INTRODUCTION:

1. We began our new series last week with the apostle Paul's salutation and introductory remarks, taking particular notice of Paul's emphasis on "the gospel of God" (1:1; cf. 1:9, 16).
2. Paul's salutation contains certain themes which are seen repeatedly throughout this epistle.
 - Paul's message is in accord with "the holy scriptures" (1:2), that is, the Old Testament.
 - Paul refers often to the resurrection of Christ (1:4).
 - Paul received his apostleship from Christ (1:5).
 - The importance of "obedience to the faith among all nations" (1:5).

I. PAUL'S INTERCESSION FOR THE SAINTS AT ROME

II. PAUL'S INTEREST IN THE SAINTS AT ROME

III. PAUL'S INTENTIONS FOR THE SAINTS AT ROME

I. PAUL'S INTERCESSION FOR THE SAINTS AT ROME

1. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all...that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (1:8, 9).
2. Once again we are reminded that the Gospel spread very rapidly in the first century -- "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (1:8).
3. Colossians 1:6 says the Gospel "is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit."
4. Colossians 1:23 says the Gospel "was preached to every creature which is under heaven."

II. PAUL'S INTEREST IN THE SAINTS AT ROME

1. Paul longed to go to Rome to see the brethren there (1:10, 11; cf. 15:22-24).
2. Paul wanted to impart unto them some spiritual gift (1:11), and he wanted to be comforted and encouraged by them as well (1:12).
3. W.H. Griffith Thomas says "comfort" here (1:12) refers to "that strength and courage which banishes weakness and depression, and enables the soul to go forward with alacrity (cheerful readiness,

- promptness, or willingness) in the pathway of God's will" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
4. Paul had a great desire to preach the Gospel in Rome. Acts 19:21 says, "After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome."
 5. Paul prayed he would go to Rome "by any means" (Rom. 1:10). God answered that prayer by sending Paul to Rome in chains as a prisoner.
 6. That is why Paul repeatedly referred to himself as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:1; Philemon 1, 9), and "the prisoner of the Lord" (Eph. 4:1; II Tim. 1:8), not the prisoner of Rome.
 7. Paul saw God's hand in all of this (cf. Phil. 1:12-14).

III. PAUL'S INTENTIONS FOR THE SAINTS AT ROME

1. Paul's intentions were that he "might have some fruit" among them in Rome (1:13). Students of the Bible have noted Paul's modesty -- that the greatest preacher after the Lord Himself "might have some fruit"!
2. But Paul was hindered from going to Rome. "Let" in Romans 1:13 means "hindered" (cf. Rom. 15:22-24).
3. Sometimes, Satan hinders Christians. Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 2:18, "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us."
4. But oftentimes, God closes certain doors in order that the Gospel can be preached elsewhere. We see this in Acts 16:6-10.
5. Paul's plans can be summarized in three words: his burden, his boldness, and his belief.
 - His burden -- "I am debtor..." (1:14).
 - His boldness -- "I am ready..." (1:15).
 - His belief -- "I am not ashamed..." (1:16).
6. To Paul it made no difference whether a man was a Greek or a Barbarian, wise or unwise, learned or ignorant, cultured or crude -- Paul was a debtor to every man (1:14).
7. Paul said he was a "debtor" (1:14). Debtors must pay their debts. Paul not only had an obligation to God, but to his fellow man.
8. John Phillips said, "Those who know the truth in Christ are debtors to all mankind. They are like those lepers of old who, having stumbled on vast resources when their fellows were starving in a besieged city, must say, 'We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace' (II Kings 7:9). That is the spirit exactly. Those who

- have found the treasure of the gospel must share it with all mankind. It is a debt" (*Exploring Romans*).
9. Rome was a dangerous and wicked city, but the apostle Paul said, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome" (1:15).
 10. Daniel the prophet described Rome as a "dreadful and terrible" beast, "and strong exceedingly," with great iron teeth which "devoured and brake in pieces," and stamped down the residue with its feet (Daniel 7:7).
 11. The English writer, Sir Henry Rider Haggard, said, "Rome incarnate had no conscience; she was a lustful, devouring beast, made more bestial by her intelligence and splendor" (cited by Phillips, *Exploring Romans*).
 12. Rome was corrupt and filthy. The poet Juvenal called Rome "a filthy sewer into which the dregs of the empire flood."
 13. The philosopher Seneca said Rome was a "cesspool of iniquity."
 14. But Paul said, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (1:15).
 8. Griffith Thomas said Paul "was not afraid of Rome, and nothing even in that great place could prevent him. Its language, its culture, its sins, were as nothing because he knew his message and his Master" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
 15. John Phillips said, "When he preached (the Gospel) at Jerusalem, the religious center of the world, he was mobbed. When he preached it at Athens, the intellectual center of the world, he was mocked. When he preached it at Rome, the legislative center of the world, he was martyred. He was ready for that" (*Exploring Romans*).

CONCLUSION:

1. Paul knew the Gospel was "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (1:16).
2. The Gospel is far superior to any religion or philosophy known to man.
3. I concluded last week with a quote from John Phillips: "The Gospel message grips the mind, stabs the conscience, warms the heart, saves the soul, and sanctifies the life. It can make drunken men sober, crooked men straight, and profligate women pure. It is a message sufficient to transform the life of any who believe" (*Exploring Romans*).